

In Leap Year

BY

Martha McCulloch-Williams

(Copyright, 1912, by Associated Literary Press.)

Morna's eyes were troubled. Therefore her Faithful Heart lost something of his joy in the joyous summer day. He knew every change of the eyes—beautiful brown eyes, dark and liquid, set under arched brows and curtained with long, soft, straight lashes. Most lashes so long and thick have a trick of curling upward. Morna's rather lay in soft dusk fringe over the splendors underneath, or made a fairy shadow against the healthy pallor of her oval cheeks.

Faithful Heart, of course, had another name—indifferent folk called him John Speer—"Honest John" more commonly. He was as honest as he was sturdy and ugly. It was an engaging ugliness, that made children hold out imploring arms to him, and dogs follow him, wagging the tail in joy.

He had grown up knowing Morna and loving her. He could not recall the day since he was ten and she a fairy of four that he had not been conscious of somehow having her in charge. After a sort she belonged to his people, being orphan step-daughter to the aunt who mothered him most. He did not live with the motherer, but with two of her spinster sisters. Both adored him, but being stiff and shy, never dared show him the open tenderness he got from Mrs. Ware.

Morna was rising twenty now—in another six months she would come into her property, a small competence inherited from her mother, and kept sacredly intact by her step-mother. Mrs. Ware was eager to have John press for marriage—no telling what a girl might do when she had ready money and absolute freedom in the spending of it.

John was not afraid either would go to Morna's head. Also he had a certain man's pride in showing his world and hers that if she came to him it would be open-eyed and free from choice, without a trace of compulsive family influence.

He was, indeed, a Faithful Heart—foolishly faithful, foolishly fond it might be. Even as he loved Morna he trusted her. In reward she had always been open as the day toward him. That made her present state at once puzzling and unpleasant. If any-



"Who is He?"

thing really troubled her, John felt it at once his right and his privilege to know it and seek a remedy.

It was tantalizing that he could not go straight to her—he had Aunt Martha's Sunday school boys in charge, to say nothing of the old folk from the poorhouse whom Aunt Mary had insisted must be brought to the basket meeting. Since it came off upon a Saturday rather than Sunday it owned a holiday aspect in which there was nothing of sacrifice.

The countryside for ten miles round about, and almost the whole of two villages, had come together in the big shady grove rimming Asbury meeting house, to sit under a brush arbor fanned by winds from heaven, hear glad tidings of great joy, then between sermons eat the fat and drink the sweet and hear the news of a whole year.

Morna was looking out for the Ware dinner baskets, helped by a slim darkish young fellow wholly strange. John wondered, raging inly, if the dark fellow could be her perplexity.

He was lithe and light on his feet, moving as if on springs. Yet there was something tense in his face, an edged timbre in his voice when he flung gay banter right and left.

As Mrs. Ware sailed majestically past, John caught her arm, asking under breath with the faintest nod toward the stranger: "Who is he?"

"Why! Hasn't Morna told you? Her cousin Len—all the really blood cousin she's got in the world!" Mrs. Ware said in half whisper. "Son to her mother's brother—you know she was a Gordon. This Lenox is awful friendly and bright spoken, but some way—well, I wish he hadn't come."

"Don't worry—he shan't make trouble for anybody," John said stoutly, though in heart not quite as ease.

His aunt passed on with a sigh of relief. The morning service was over—the intermission was fairly a-buzz with hospitality. Yearly the basket dinner was a sort of housewifely competition. Though all baskets were spread upon common tables free to everybody, those who had fetched them made a point of seeing that their own friends got the best of their own choice edibles. Also that the poorer folk, and especially the county charges, were not slighted. John Speer and his spinster aunts were not singular in their determination that God's poor should be considered when they had come to the services in God's house.

Waiting upon them, looking out for the small boys, with side efforts for Aunt Martha and Aunt Mary, kept John so occupied he could do no more than smile at Morna, until, everybody fed to repletion, the crowd began to scatter and clot for intimate gossip. Lenox Gordon had momentarily left her—John almost ran to her, caught her arm and drew her apart, saying hushedly: "Tell me the trouble, dear!"

"I can't! I—I mustn't—but oh! I do wish I could," Morna answered breathlessly.

John smiled at her. "I am sure you will tell me—whether or no you can," he said. "Out with it! At once."

"I—I—don't know—how to begin," Morna said flushing a little.

"It's about your cousin," John said with decision, not interrogation.

She started. "How do you know?" she asked.

"Never mind," John retorted. "Tell me what he wants."

"He—wants me to—to—marry him—right away," Morna said with a little shudder, half closing her eyes.

John frowned. "Very naturally he does," he said. "But why such suddenness and haste?"

"I ought not to tell you," Morna said wistfully. "But, oh—I am so unhappy—yet—there seems no other way out."

"Out of what?" John demanded, his breathing short.

"Trouble!" Morna whispered. "Trouble of the worst. Lenox has used money—not his own—speculated and lost it. Not so very much money—but more than he can get any other way."

"The cur!" John snapped through shut teeth. "So he would beggar you to save himself!"

"No! I—there would be something left—quite half my money," Morna interrupted breathlessly. "I can't stand by and see shame fall on my blood—my mother's name. He says if I will only save him, he will give me back my freedom—after a little—and work the rest of his life—work honestly, to pay me."

"I have a better plan," John interrupted, his brow clearing. "I see his point—married you come straight into your fortune, no matter who your husband may be. To save your pride, and also to save a man who may not be wholly bad, I'm quite willing to sacrifice myself. Marry me—and I engage to see Lenox through."

"Oh! If only you will take me—I—I wanted so to ask you," Morna panted, her eyes shining star-wise.

John had much ado to keep from kissing her on the spot. "You are a coward," he said gravely, though his eyes danced. "You know it is leap year—"

"So it is—but I had forgotten," Morna flashed at him. "Now you mention it, everything is easy. Mr. John Speer, when will you marry me?"

"As soon as we can find the presiding elder," John said, catching her hand quite openly and leading her away.

And this is how it happened that the basket meeting had a sensation—John and Morna stood up in the face of it, and were married before afternoon service.

Applied Economics. "Aren't you afraid to use such an unreliable piece of rope to swing the hammock?"

"No," replied Farmer Cornloss. "The individual must expect to make sacrifices for the general good. When that hammock breaks some one person is going to get hurt a little and scared a whole lot. But think of what a laugh all the other boarders will enjoy!"

Queer how a waiter can raise the dance by dropping the tray.

INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

(By E. O. SELLERS, Director of Evening Department, The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago.)

LESSON FOR JULY 21

THE GROWTH OF THE KINGDOM.

LESSON TEXT—Mark 4:26-32, Matt. 13:31.
GOLDEN TEXT—"Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, as in heaven so on earth."—Matt. 6:10.

Last week we observed the fact that the genesis of this new kingdom Jesus came to establish was to be the life, his life, when was as seed. The reception of the seed in various sorts of soil, however, made a vast difference as to the ultimate outcome. Today we may observe from these words of the Master what are to be the processes of the establishing of the kingdom, for we do not read into this parable a record of the final consummation, but rather that these parables reveal different aspects of the same general process.

While it is true that this first parable is only recorded by St. Mark it is in reality a complement of these parables about the kingdom found in the thirteenth of Matthew and elsewhere. We have already noted that the seed is the word, Luke 8:11, and that the soil is the hearts of men, but here Jesus tells us that in the spiritual as in the material universe man "knoweth not how" the life principle propagates itself. It is a helpful thought to every Christian worker that he is not to be held accountable for that part of the process; his part is to be that of the man who shall cast the seed into the ground. Not upon, but "into" (v. 26). Having thus planted the seed let him "sleep and rise again" e. g., let him trust a wise God to see to it that the seed germinate and bring forth. All of your worrying and mine cannot hasten the process nor change the result once the seed is sown, so let us be careful to sow them right and as far as possible be sure we plant it in properly prepared soil.

Process is Gradual.

Again let us beware of presumptuousness "he knoweth not how." Can you, my reader, define life? Can you explain the transmission, the development, the propagation of life? We accept the results of these things in nature without questioning, why stagger at similar things in the spiritual realm? Why question the reality of the Christian life when we see all about us its results? In verses 22 and 23 of this same chapter we are admonished that if we have ears "let him hear" (a positive injunction) and almost the very next word tells us to "take heed what we hear." Going on down to verse 28 of the lesson we see clearly the reason for these words, for our lives will grow and will reproduce each after its own kind. If we sow wheat we reap wheat. If we allow tares to be sown in our lives we shall reap tares.

The process is a gradual one, but a sure one. "First the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear." The harvest will not take place until the process be completed. It is not till the fruit is ripe that the husbandman puts forth his sickle. We are not to bother ourselves so much with the process as we are to guard the source. Sow good seed and God will see to it that it shall bring forth. Let us not expect the "full corn" of ripe experience from the "tender blade" of early Christian life. Let us have patience till these young Christians have time to reach the full maturity of their powers. Jesus the harvester of this parable knew when to put in the sickle, viz., when the fruit is "ripe" (v. 29, R. V.).

The Main Truth.

Looking back over history his was indeed "less than all the seeds in the earth," yet he set into motion those principles and powers that have caused his kingdom to become great in the earth (Isa. 9:7). Under the branches of this kingdom have lodged the weary and the stricken ones. The birds of the air symbolize the gathering together of the nations of the earth that they may take refuge under the shelter and shadow of the kingdom of God, see Ezek. 17, Daniel 4, etc. We must beware of fanciful interpretations or applications. The main truth is that almost without exception the beginnings of all great movements in the kingdom of God have been like mustard seed, small but exceeding great in their growth. Witness such moral developments as the slavery question. Compare the present day temperance agitation with what it amounted to one hundred, yes, twenty-five years ago. The same can be said of countless other "movements."

DR. PRICE'S Cream BAKING POWDER

IS ABSOLUTELY HEALTHFUL

Its active principle solely grape acid and baking soda. It makes the food more delicious and wholesome.

The low priced, low grade powders put alum or lime phosphates in the food.

Ask Your Doctor About That

RECORD OF TIME'S CHANGES

Surely Visitor to the Scenes of His Boyhood Could Not Fail to Be Impressed.

"I reckon you see the old town looking some different from what it looked when you left it thirty years ago," said Uncle Eb Skinner to the native returning for a visit to the scenes of his boyhood. "All o' the back part o' Peevy's store is new since your day here, an' that bay window in the drug store was put in since you left us. The deepo used to be painted yellor instid o' red, an' the town hall is bet by steam now instid o' with stoves, like it used to be in your time. Them two iron hitch posts in front o' the postoffice ain't been there more than ten years" and that stone watering trough instid o' the old wooden one you remember is another change. I reckon you've noticed that Hi Greene has raised his house a story an' added a summer kitchen. That plazy in front o' the hotel is another change in the old town, an', of course, you've noticed the new boss sheds back o' the church, an' the broom shop wa'n't here when you was a boy with us. It employs five hands reg'lar an' seven in the rush season. Time makes changes, as I reckon you have seen."—From Judge.

Shock for a Brother.

"John," said an eminent physician, wearily, entering his home after a hard day's work, "John, if anyone calls excuse me."

"Yes, suh," agreed John, the old family darkey.

"Just say," explained the doctor, "that the masseur is with me."

A little later the doctor's brother called—called and received the shock of his life.

"I want to see the doctor at once," said he.

"Yuh can't do it, sur," solemnly announced the old darkey, turning up his eyes till the whites alone showed. "Yuh can't do it, suh. The doctor, suh, am wid de Messiah."—New York Evening Sun.

Her Ruling Passion.

The woman who had chased dust and dirt all her life finally reached St. Peter.

"Come in, you poor, tired woman," he said, and held the gate ajar.

But the woman hesitated.

"Tell me first," she said, "how often you clean house?"

The saint smiled.

"You can't shake off the ruling passion, can you?" he said. "Oh, well, step inside and they'll give you a broom and dustpan instead of a harp."—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Their Need.

Seedy Applicant—I can bring tears to the eyes of the audience.

Theatrical Manager—Huh! We want somebody who can bring the audience.—Puck.

The Worrier.

Knicker—Does Jack worry?

Bocker—Yes; he wants to pasteurize spilt milk.—Judge.

When God calls, the safest step we can take is straight ahead.

Even your best friends haven't time to do much worrying on your account.

Least you forget when next in need of a laxative remember the name "Starfield Tea." A trial will convince you of its merits.

It's easier to lead some men to drink than it is to drive them away from it.

A woman may not realize that she has a good figure until other women begin to find fault with it.

Living Up to Its Name.

'How do people seem to like your new song, 'The Aeroplane?'

'Just carried away by it.'

Practical Version.

Mrs. Knicker—Laugh and the world laughs with you.

Mrs. Bocker—Weep and you get a present.

Nothin' in It.

Teacher of infant geography class—John Mace may tell us what a strait is.

John Mace—It's jus' th' plain stuff, 'thout nothin' in it.—Judge.

True to His Trust.

"Father," asked the beautiful girl, "did you bring home that material for my new skirt?"

"Yes."

"Where is it?"

"Let me see? Wait now. Don't be impatient! I didn't forget it. I'm sure I've got it in one of my pockets, somewhere."

Simple Explanation.

To illustrate a point that he was making—that his was the race with a future and not a race with a past—Booker T. Washington told this little story the other day.

He was standing by his door one morning when old Aunt Caroline went by.

"Good morning, Aunt Caroline," he said. "Where are you going this morning?"

"Lawzee, Mi'sta' Wash'ton," she replied. "I've done been what I've gwine."—Kansas City Star.

A Question of Names.

In some of the country districts of Ireland it is not an uncommon thing to see carts with the owners' names chalked on to save the expense of painting. Practical jokers delight in rubbing out these signs to annoy the owners.

A constabulary sergeant one day accosted a countryman whose name had been thus wiped out unknown to him.

"Is this your cart, my good man?"

"Of course it is!" was the reply. "Do you see anything the matter wid it?"

"I observe," said the pompous policeman, "that your name is obliterated."

"Then ye're wrong," quoth the countryman, who had never come across the long word before, "for me name's O'Flaherty, and I don't care who knows it."—Youth's Companion.

"He bit the hand that fed him" said Teddy of Big Bill, And didn't tell us if the bite had made the biter ill. Now had Toasties been the subject of Bill's voracious bite He'd have come back for another with a keener appetite.

Written by WILLIAM T. HINCKS, 307 State St., Bridgeport, Conn.

One of the 50 Jingles for which the Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich., paid \$1000.00 in May.